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In-depth evaluation of the electoral assistance programme

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with paragraph 5 (e) (i) of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the electoral assistance programme, dated 12 March 1999. The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices. The Secretary-General takes note of the findings of the report and concurs with its recommendations.

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Annex

In-depth evaluation of the electoral assistance programme

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report reviews the achievements and shortcomings of the United Nations electoral assistance programme from 1992 to 1998 in (a) coordinating, considering and channelling requests for electoral assistance to the appropriate office or programme; (b) strengthening national capacity to organize and conduct democratic elections on a regular basis; (c) establishing and maintaining working relationships with relevant organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations; and (d) developing an institutional memory of United Nations experience in the electoral field.

The report focuses on (a) the role of the Electoral Assistance Division in the context of the changing nature of the electoral assistance network and international norms and codes of practice; (b) overlapping roles and responsibilities in the area of electoral assistance among units and organizations of the United Nations system; (c) internal and external assessments of Electoral Assistance Division major activities; and (d) adequacy of existing standard operating procedures, institutional memory and lessons learned processes. Recommendations are made with respect to guidelines to Member States seeking electoral assistance: orientation and responsibilities of the Electoral Assistance Division/Department of Political Affairs for needs assessment, re-establishment and development of an electoral assistance network, contribution to intergovernmental political debate, coordination and facilitation of lessons learned, facilitation of the development of regional associations of electoral officials, mainstreaming of gender issues, active solicitation of extrabudgetary funds, and allocation of responsibilities for electoral assistance within the United Nations.

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Introduction

1. At its thirty-seventh session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination recommended to the General Assembly that an in-depth evaluation of the United Nations electoral assistance be prepared for consideration by the Committee in 1999 (see A/52/16,[1] para. 306).

2. The standard procedures for an in-depth evaluation were followed: initial consultations with the Department of Political Affairs, collection of available information, including existing assessments, requests for information addressed to entities dealing with electoral assistance, and structured interviews of staff members of the Department and these entities. Among the documents reviewed were internal assessment reports: a comprehensive review covering the period 1992–1994; a short report by a consultant; and discussions held at an Electoral Assistance Division staff retreat. These reports represent a significant self-evaluation effort on the part of the Division. The Central Evaluation Unit also took note of an independent study commissioned by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of electoral activities of five multilateral organizations to which Canada belongs: the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the International Organization of the Francophonie, the Commonwealth and the United Nations. A systematic review of the professional literature was also conducted. The comments of management were sought on the draft report and were taken into account in the preparation of this final report. *None of the departments or offices consulted in the review process wished to record dissenting views on the findings in this report.*

3. Another methodological issue is the effort to mainstream gender issues. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/100, called upon all States and the United Nations system to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective at all levels, including in the design, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes to ensure effective implementation of all critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action. In the area of electoral assistance, this issue is particularly relevant. An official document for the Fourth World Conference on Women[2] indicates that progress had been mixed in the post-cold-war period and problematic in many regions. Women's membership in parliaments declined between 1987 and 1994 in Eastern and Western Asia, and dropped sharply in Eastern Europe. There was a slight increase in Africa and Latin America and in developed regions outside Eastern Europe. Overall, in 1988 women representatives accounted for 14.8 per cent of all parliamentarians; by 1995 that level had dropped to 11.3 per cent. As was noted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in a report issued in December 1997, the critical issue, emphasized in the Beijing Platform for Action, is the gap between *de jure*, and de facto, or the right as against the reality of women's participation in politics and public life generally. References to gender balance and participation are noted in the report whenever they appear relevant to the discussion.

4. A great deal of attention is devoted in the report to describing the role of intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations which are active in the field of electoral assistance, some of which perform similar services to the Electoral Assistance Division of the United Nations, since this is pertinent to the future role and responsibilities of the Division.

I. Organizations providing international electoral assistance

A. United Nations

1. Focal point for electoral assistance activities and the Electoral Assistance Division

5. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/137, in 1992 the Secretary-General appointed the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs the focal point for all electoral assistance activities. The Electoral Assistance Division was established in the Department of Political Affairs in 1992 to support the focal point in carrying out his functions.

6. The medium-term plan for 1992–1997 (see A/47/6/Rev.1,[3] vol. I, paras. 4.37 to 4.40) states that the main objective of the subprogramme is to provide electoral assistance to Member States upon their request and that in implementing the subprogramme, the Secretariat will (a) coordinate and consider requests for electoral assistance; (b) channel requests for electoral assistance to the appropriate office or programme; (c) develop a system for an institutional memory of United Nations experience in the electoral field; (d) prepare a manual for use by United Nations election monitors; (e) develop a roster of international experts; (f) establish and maintain working relationships with relevant organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations in order to ensure adequate coordination and consistency of responses; (g) organize and conduct workshops on electoral assistance; (h) establish and administer a trust fund for electoral verification. In the medium-term plan for 1998–2001(see A/51/6/Rev.1,[4] vol. I, paras. 1.13 to 1.15), the emphasis shifted to the development of national electoral capacity through assisting and strengthening domestic monitors and providing support to international observers through coordination of their activities and strengthening the national capacity to organize and conduct democratic elections on a regular basis. That medium-term plan also states that guidelines and operational manuals on electoral assistance will be further developed and a roster of international experts on electoral issues will be maintained and developed, and that institutional memory on electoral assistance activities will be enhanced.

7. The Division is relatively small; its 1998–1999 authorized staffing table was one D-2, one D-1, three P-5, three P-4/3 and four General Service staff members. The Division's expenditures of regular budgetary resources remained constant at $1.8 million for 1994–1995 and 1996–1997. The Division's appropriations for 1998–1999 were $2.6 million.

8. A trust fund for electoral observation was set up in 1992 to finance, in whole or in part, electoral verification missions, preliminary or fact-finding missions in relation to requests for electoral assistance, the cost of required support in cases where follow-up of electoral process is requested and to provide coordination and support to the activities of other international observers. The Division has decided to review the terms of reference of the trust fund to make it more project oriented, to centralize the accounting of the fund and to replenish the fund by submitting proposals to regular donors through annual fund-raising appeals.

9. The first Director of the Electoral Assistance Division retired in 1995, and a new Director was not appointed until July 1998. Under its first Director, the Division played an important role in the development of international electoral assistance. The long interregnum from his departure in 1995 until the appointment of his successor in 1998, coincided with a period of greater activity by other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations involved in the field of electoral assistance.

2. United Nations Development Programme

10. At United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) headquarters in New York, the Management Development and Governance Division of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support is responsible for UNDP election-related assistance and liaises with the Electoral Assistance Division. UNDP electoral assistance projects use the array of modalities of execution currently available (Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Office for Project Services execution, national execution, execution by other agencies etc.). UNDP has issued joint guidelines with the United Nations on electoral assistance.[5]

11. Governance has become an increasingly large component of UNDP's worldwide portfolio of programmes, as demand from countries for such assistance has greatly expanded in recent years. An analysis of 115 country cooperation framework documents in 1997 showed that 63 per cent include support to governing institutions (parliaments, judiciaries and electoral bodies) as a component of their overall programmes for the period 1997–2000. A UNDP experience and lessons learned paper includes a section on election processes, where it is stated that elections are recognized by UNDP as prerequisites for the establishing of strong governing institutions. In most cases, when United Nations electoral assistance is provided to a country, UNDP's country office plays the role of a central support system for such an undertaking. Often, UNDP formulates and implements electoral assistance projects and it supports missions to conduct electoral needs assessments and meet specialized technical assistance requirements.

3. Other organizations

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

12. Since 1990, the Centre for Human Rights and subsequently the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has provided electoral assistance through its technical cooperation programme. In order to facilitate action in this area, the Office has also prepared guidelines for analysis of electoral laws and procedures, published a handbook on human rights and elections, developed draft guidelines for human rights assessments of requests for electoral assistance, and carried out a number of public information activities related to human rights and elections. The Office has participated in joint missions with the Electoral Assistance Division, most significantly in connection with Malawi. The focus of the Office's assistance in human rights-related electoral projects is on building or strengthening national capacities through advisory services, training and education activities. These activities are carried out at the request of Member States and funded through the voluntary funds for technical cooperation.

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

13. Since 1989, the former Division for Governance, Public Administration and Finance, now the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration, within its broad mandate of sharing and promoting good practices of public management and public administration in the delivery of public services, has provided support and technical assistance to electoral management bodies. This technical assistance has included missions initiated by the relevant predecessor department and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, by UNDP country offices and by the Electoral Assistance Division after its creation in 1992. Following the creation of the Division, the Department informed it of requests received from the UNDP offices for technical assistance to electoral management bodies. The Department, with its substantive capacity on electoral administration, managed the projects but kept the Division informed of these activities. The Department's missions initiated by UNDP or the Division covered the following range of activities: assessment of technical assistance needs;

formulation, implementation and management of UNDP electoral assistance projects; advisory services to the electoral authorities, and participation in conferences and regional colloquia. Recently, in partnership with the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the Department, with UNDP funding support, has participated in the development of a CD-ROM on the administration and cost of elections project, whose main purpose was to provide comprehensive and systematic information to those who design electoral procedures and provide advice to electoral management bodies. For the period 1992–1998, the Division participated in 60 electoral assistance-related projects.

Office for Project Services

14. Since 1994, the Office for Project Services has collaborated with the Electoral Assistance Division in executing — occasionally implementing — electoral projects. In most cases, UNDP is the requesting and funding agent, although the Division can also act as the funding agent. In providing such services, the Office relied on its internal support services for personnel, procurement of goods or services and for training, as well as on its roster of specialized personnel and suppliers for electoral projects. The Chief Technical Adviser reports to the Division for technical matters and to the Office for logistical and administrative matters. The Office obtains the Division's clearance in the recruitment of experts and in selecting suppliers or non-governmental organizations as subcontractors.

Department of Peacekeeping Operations

15. For mandated peacekeeping or special missions with an electoral component, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as the executive arm of the Secretary-General for peacekeeping operations, develops plans and provides administrative, logistic and communications support to the electoral component of the mission. The staffing of the electoral unit of the mission is conducted in consultation with the Electoral Assistance Division. The Lessons Learned Unit of the Department also reviews lessons learnt from the electoral component of these missions. Division staff participated in the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium lessons learnt exercise.

4. Roles and responsibilities

16. As indicated by the above brief description, there are units and organizations within the United Nations system which have overlapping roles in the area of electoral assistance. Three recent assessment studies have concluded that there is a need to rationalize the division of responsibilities among these various organizations. An internal memorandum of the former Department for Development Support and Management Services dated May 1996 noted a declining trend in the number of requests by UNDP and the Electoral Assistance Division for execution by the Department of electoral assistance projects and recommended that a high-level meeting be organized between the Department, the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP to define a protocol of cooperation and resolve apparent conflict between these three groups. From the donors' perspective, there appears to be some confusion regarding the respective mechanisms established by the Division and UNDP to channel bilateral contributions for electoral assistance. Both the Division and UNDP have established electoral assistance trust funds. However, the UNDP trust fund, which has been relatively inactive, is being phased out. In addition, UNDP country offices may establish country-specific trust funds at the request of the donor community to collect and channel bilateral contributions to a specific election.

B. Regional and other intergovernmental organizations

17. With the end of the cold war in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many regional and intergovernmental organizations provided assistance to countries in organizing their first democratic elections. There has been a significant growth in the actors and participants active in this field. However, as there is no global survey of international electoral assistance, it is difficult to quantify this growth.

European Union

18. The European Union considers electoral assistance as one of the main activities within the general strategy aimed at promoting the rule of law and democratic freedoms. The European Union's commitment has been reaffirmed in European Union treaties and a wide range of European Union initiatives, including electoral assistance. During the 1990s, the European Union actively supported electoral processes, which are considered as a strategic phase in building democracy. In view of the political dimension of electoral assistance, several joint actions have been undertaken in the framework of the common foreign and security policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1996, 1997 and 1998), Palestine (1995) and former Zaire (1996). Besides their political impact, these actions can be economically measured and amount to more than 20 million ECUs. The latest example was the joint action to support the elections in Nigeria in February 1999. In addition, the European Union has largely funded electoral assistance missions and projects which have been developed in close cooperation with Member States, international organizations (in particular OSCE) and non-governmental organizations. In 1997, a specific European Union budget line targeted to electoral observation was created, complementing the funds allocated to electoral assistance within the European Union budget.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

19. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Europe, created in 1991, has a professional staff of 26 and devotes a large proportion of its resources to election monitoring. To date the Office has assisted in the observation of approximately 40 elections in 16 countries. It includes an Election Section, which serves as the coordinating office of OSCE election observation missions, observes elections, assists in the review of electoral laws and administration and the implementation of recommendations that may result from the election observation missions, and organizes election-related seminars. The Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE, which was created in 1991 and which meets once a year, has traditionally provided separate electoral observation missions and reporting, although recently it has been operating under the umbrella of the Office.

Organization of American States

20. In 1990, the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy was established to respond promptly and effectively to member States that, in the full exercise of their sovereignty, request advice or assistance in preserving or strengthening their political institutions and democratic procedures. The Unit also promotes the exchange of information and expertise on democratic development among member States. OAS has been involved in approximately 40 electoral observations missions since 1990. The Unit's electoral technical assistance programme provides assistance to electoral institutions and fosters exchange of experience and knowledge among these and related institutions in order to facilitate the modernization and improvement of electoral systems.[6]

Organization of African Unity

21. At the twenty-sixth session of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at Addis Ababa in July 1990, African heads of State and Government adopted a declaration on the political and socio-economic situation in Africa and the fundamental changes taking place in the world, which expressed a commitment to further democratization of African societies and the consolidation of democratic institutions. At the same session, African heads of State and Government also adopted the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, which was the culmination of an international conference on popular participation in the recovery and development process in Africa, held earlier in 1990 at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania. Since 1990, OAU has despatched observer missions to most member States which organized elections. It provided electoral assistance observations in 65 missions in 35 member States. It has also provided technical assistance and on occasion mediation to resolve electoral crises.

Commonwealth

22. The Commonwealth is committed to strengthening democracy and good governance. Its executive arm, the Commonwealth secretariat, organizes a range of activities to promote the 54-country association's Harare Principles as contained in the 1991 Harare Declaration adopted by the Commonwealth heads of Government. One aspect of these activities is to organize independent Commonwealth election observer groups. While the mandate of these missions has traditionally been limited to observing and proposing electoral recommendations, since 1997 the mandate has been extended to include proposing broader governmental recommendations on such issues as separation of powers, legislative reform, good governance and political party development. The secretariat also provides technical assistance to Commonwealth election management bodies, and runs workshops and training courses to promote good democratic practices. All such activities are undertaken in response to requests from member Governments. The focal point concerning Commonwealth activities to promote democracy is the Director of the Political Affairs Division.

International Organization of the Francophonie, (formerly Agence de cooperation culturelle et technique)

23. Since the Dakar summit in 1989, the agency has been mandated to develop programmes in favour of human rights and democracy. Since 1992, when it began its programme of electoral observation, the agency has conducted 37 electoral observation missions and 18 needs assessment missions. In addition, it has provided technical support to electoral bodies.

Inter-Parliamentary Union

24. Activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in the field of elections focus on standard setting, promoting the participation of women in political life and strengthening parliaments. Thus, IPU carries out studies and develops norms relating to electoral processes, such as the universal declaration on democracy, criteria for free and fair elections, and codes of conduct for elections. IPU also collects data on parliamentary elections and their results, and has created a database available to wider public; it maintains a worldwide collection of constitutions and electoral laws as well as specialized literature in the field. IPU activities in the area of research, world surveys and debates and publications have a clear gender dimension: the IPU publication *Men and Women in Politics, Democracy in the Making* (1997) is an example of that. Another major activity of IPU is its technical assistance

programme, which aims to strengthen the parliamentary institution resulting from the electoral process and promote respect for the outcome of the electoral process.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

25. Located at Stockholm, International IDEA was established by an international treaty in 1995. Its members include 17 Governments and four international non-governmental organizations. A gender working group was established at International IDEA in September 1996. Recently, the Institute completed a handbook entitled *Women in Parliament*. Examples of other publications by the Institute include *Proceedings of the Democracy Forum* (1996 and 1997), *Democracy in Romania I* (June 1997), *Consolidating Democracy in Nepal II* (June 1997) and *Evaluating Election Observation Missions: Lessons Learned from the Russian Elections of 1996* (various codes of conduct also published by the Institute are discussed in para. 47 below). International IDEA has a staff of 40 and annual budget of $8.5 million.

C. Other assistance and related activities

26. Many national Governments have provided technical and financial electoral assistance on both a bilateral and multilateral basis.

27. Other non-governmental organizations, such as the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Carter Centre have been very active in electoral assistance. IFES, established in 1987, has conducted projects in 85 countries. As indicated in paragraph 13 above, IFES is a partner with the United Nations and International IDEA in the administration and cost of elections project.

28. The following are activities of regional associations of electoral officials:

(a) A colloquium on African election administration was convened at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in November 1994. The Electoral Assistance Division was a co-sponsor of the colloquium together with the former Department for Development Support and Management Services, IFES, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the African American Institute. The Association of African Election Authorities was established and held its founding meeting at Kampala in January 1997. The meeting was supported by IFES and the Electoral Assistance Division. The inaugural general assembly meeting of the Association of African Election Authorities at Accra in August 1998 was coordinated by IFES and hosted by the electoral commission of Ghana. Participants discussed campaign finance, demarcation of constituency boundaries, voting abroad, and the administration of local elections in both plenary and working group sessions;

(b) The founding general assembly meeting of the Association of Caribbean Electoral Organizations took place at San Juan, Puerto Rico in March 1998;

(c) A regional conference for Central Asian election administrators, held at Almaty, Kazakhstan in November 1998, was attended by approximately 60 election administrators from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and discussed such issues as the increasing professionalism of elections administration, informing the electorate and resolving electoral disputes. The conference was co-sponsored by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Electoral Assistance Division, UNDP and IFES.

D. United Nations electoral assistance network

29. A conference on the coordination of international assistance in the electoral field was convened by the United Nations at Ottawa in October 1992. The primary purpose of the conference was to examine ways of strengthening cooperation among Governments, international, regional, multilateral parliamentary and non-governmental organizations. Conference participants identified the following areas in which mutual support and cooperation could be strengthened: (a) information-sharing, (b) financial, material and technical assistance, and (c) electoral observation. In recognition of its comprehensive and versatile role, the United Nations — specifically the Electoral Assistance Unit — was designated the focal point for voluntary information-sharing and networking. The Conference approved the establishment under the auspices of the Electoral Assistance Unit of an electoral assistance information network.

30. The most recent report of the electoral assistance information network issued by the Electoral Assistance Division covers the period 1 January 1992–31 December 1993, and is dated July 1994. During this period, the membership of the network consisted of 18 States and 16 intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations providing electoral assistance, as well as the United Nations itself. The report consisted of brief descriptions of the electoral assistance activities of the network's members for each of the 92 countries receiving assistance during the period covered. It also listed seminars, conferences and workshops held, and publications issued, on electoral assistance, as well as the names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers of electoral assistance focal points. No equivalent record of worldwide electoral assistance exists for the period since it was discontinued. With the development of the Internet, it is now possible to have a record of prospective activities updated regularly and distributed, with no delay to all members of the network.

31. In 1998, the Central Evaluation Unit conducted an opinion survey of intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on the mailing list of the Division. There was virtual unanimity on two points:

(a) It would be useful for the United Nations to re-establish an electoral assistance network;

(b) The network should sponsor exchanges of information on the electoral assistance activities in general and produce reports on activities of its members.

32. Respondents who had attended the 1992 Ottawa conference considered that the United Nations should again play the role of convener of periodic meetings along the same lines; these meetings would be most useful if they were relatively informal and designed to permit participants to understand each others' projects, and to formulate recommendations and develop commitments. Other proposals of respondents included:

(a) *Regional associations of electoral officials*: the United Nations should act as a coordinator and convene periodic meetings of the leadership of these associations;

(b) Training: the United Nations should play a leadership role in the development of curricula for short courses on all aspects of elections, using the material developed in the administration and cost of elections project.

II. International norms, mandates and codes of practice

A. Norms in international instruments and agreements

33. At the level of broad principles, the General Assembly has underscored the significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which establish that the authority to govern shall be based on the will of the people as expressed in periodic and genuine elections. An elaborate analysis of the pertinent clauses included in the full range of international instruments is included in a handbook published in 1994 by the Centre for Human Rights. Apart from the Declaration and the Covenant, the handbook also took into account universal instruments, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights. The handbook's analysis also includes regional instruments.

34. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women places special importance on the participation of women in the public life of their countries. Article 7 of the Convention calls on States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country, and in particular shall insure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for elections to all publicly elected bodies. Article 8 calls on States Parties to ensure that women have equal opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations. Other international instruments, conventions and declarations also place great importance on the participation of women in public life, and have set a framework of international standards of equality, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and paragraph 13 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

35. IPU has focused on all aspects of women's participation in the electoral process both as voters and candidates, including legislation, electoral practices, institutional and cultural inhibition and barriers, action at the level of political parties, quotas and positive discrimination measures. In 1994, it developed a plan of action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, and has collected statistical data on the outcome of legislative elections with respect to gender, maintained a Web site and issued statistical surveys on this subject.

B. Actions by the General Assembly

1. Mandates for electoral assistance

36. Since 1991, the General Assembly has adopted a series of resolutions pertaining to enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections.[7] At the same time, the General Assembly has reaffirmed respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes in another series of resolutions.[8] These mandates have broadened over the last few years. As requested in these resolutions, the Secretary-General has submitted reports on electoral issues to the General Assembly.[9] It should be noted that none of the General Assembly resolutions

discussed in this section make reference to gender or gender balance. The recent evolution of electoral assistance mandates in General Assembly resolutions is outlined in table 1.

Table 1
Evolution of electoral assistance mandates provided by the General Assembly under the item "Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections", 1990–1998

	Session of the General Assembly when the mandated activity was first mentioned in a resolution								
Mandated activity	*45*	*46*	*47*	*48*	*49*	*50*	*51*	*52*	*53*
Electoral assistance at request of Member States			X						
Develop institutional memory						X			
Maintain roster of experts			X						
Collaboration with other United Nations departments and UNDP			X						
Coordination with intergovernmental organizations			X						
Human rights advisory services				X					
Prerequisites for United Nations assistance: adequate time, conditions for free and fair elections, and adequate and comprehensive reporting of results			X						
Assistance before and after elections, including needs assessment missions					X				
Programmes for consolidation of democratic process					X				
Coordination of election preparation/observation with NGOs					X				
Post-election assistance to contribute to stability and continuity of electoral processes						X			
Support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to democratization activities						X			
UNDP civil service reform and governance						X			
Enhancing capacity of electoral institutions						X			
Post-election assistance to contribute to sustainability of electoral processes						X			
Respond to evolving nature of requests and growing need for medium-term assistance								X	

37. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/185, took note of the evolution in the nature of requests for assistance, and recommended that the Electoral Assistance Division consider ways to respond to its increased and evolving responsibilities and enlarged mandate, and report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-second session. The Secretary-General's report to the Assembly at its fifty-second session concluded with some reflections for future activity, noting that emphasis must now be placed on the sustainability of the electoral process and on assisting electoral administrators; that needs assessment missions must engage representatives of requesting Governments in an active dialogue; that the Division needs to be prepared to backstop field projects over longer periods of time; and that compilation and sharing of information and data on elections and their administration is an important new service which the United Nations is working to provide (see A/52/474, paras. 32–35).

38. Electoral assistance activities have also been considered in the Assembly since the forty-ninth session, in 1994, in a third series of resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General under the item "Support by the United Nations system for the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies."[10] This item was initiated after the Second International Conference on New and Restored Democracies, held at Managua in July 1994. The Secretary-General, in reports to the General Assembly under this item,[11] has discussed electoral activities in this broader context. In fact, the most elaborate presentation of systematic information and statistics on United Nations electoral assistance is to be found in the annexes to one such report, document A/51/512. The General Assembly, in paragraph 9 of its resolution 53/31, encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization in these areas. The reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly under this item are not drafted by staff of the Division but originate in a different section of the Department of Political Affairs.

2. Guidelines for Member States

39. Guidelines on electoral assistance for Member States have developed through review by the General Assembly of proposals by the Secretary-General. Initially, the Secretary-General, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/150, invited Member States to submit their views concerning suitable approaches that would permit the Organization to respond to requests from Member States for electoral assistance. A report submitted to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session proposed four criteria which should be satisfied if an eventual mission were to be considered. The General Assembly, in its resolution 46/137, took note of those criteria, which it decided should be met before the Organization agreed to requests for electoral verification. At the forty-seventh session, the Secretary-General proposed revised criteria and also proposed guidelines on the organization and conduct of an electoral process, supervision of an electoral process, verification of an electoral process, following an electoral process, and provision of support to other international observers. The General Assembly, in paragraph 9 of its resolution 47/138, recommended that the proposed guidelines on electoral assistance be considered as provisional and requested the Secretary-General to evaluate them in the light of experience. It should be noted that the above-mentioned guidelines to Member States do not mention gender issues.

40. An evaluation of the guidelines was submitted to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session (A/48/590, paras. 56–74). In its resolution 48/131, the Assembly requested that United Nations electoral assistance continue on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the proposed guidelines (para. 2) and asked for a revised set of guidelines for consideration at its forty-ninth session (para. 10). The revised guidelines for Member States considering the formulation of requests for electoral assistance (A/49/675, annex III) set out preconditions for and types of electoral assistance. The preconditions were first, a formal written request from the Government, and second, a determination by a United Nations electoral assistance mission of whether the United Nations should provide assistance, which involved a determination by the mission that the basic conditions for a legitimate and truly democratic process are present (paras. 2 and 3). In paragraph 3 of its resolution 49/190, the Assembly requested that the United Nations continue its efforts to ensure, before undertaking to provide electoral assistance to a requesting State, that there is adequate time to organize and carry out an effective mission for providing such assistance, that conditions exist to allow a free and fair election and that provisions can be made for adequate and comprehensive reporting on the results of the mission. In paragraph 13 of the same resolution, the Assembly took note of the guidelines.

C. Standard-setting by other intergovernmental organizations

European Union

41. In June 1998, the Council of Ministers of the European Union (EU) adopted a document setting minimum conditions for EU involvement in electoral assistance. These include universal franchise, the rights for political parties and individual candidates to take part in the elections, freedom of expression, and reasonable access to the media by all parties and candidates. The document contained a code of conduct for electoral observers, and the European Commission is currently preparing a first communication on electoral assistance which will outline a common approach in terms of guidelines and criteria regarding electoral assistance missions.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

42. The OSCE commitments, agreed upon at Copenhagen at the second meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension in 1990, emphasize the central role of elections in securing the citizen's right to participate in the Government of his or her country. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights election observation handbook for 1997 states that the OSCE commitments should be clearly reflected in the legal framework for the election, including the constitution and the statutory provisions (election law, political party law, media law, criminal code, rules of procedure), and that the Office would not be inclined to observe an election in which the OSCE commitments were not clearly reflected in the governing legislation and regulations. The handbook provides detailed guidelines for election observers.

Organization of American States

43. The 1985 amendments to the OAS charter of 1948, referring to the role of representative democracy, provide the general principles underlying electoral observation procedures in OAS. By a resolution adopted in November 1989, the OAS General Assembly recommended that observation missions be sent to States at their request for the purpose of observing the development, if possible, of all the stages of the electoral process. In 1998, OAS published a manual for the organization of election observation missions.

Organization of African Unity

44. Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights,[12] which was adopted at Nairobi in 1981 and was ratified in 1986, stipulates the rights of citizens to take part in the Government of their country. The Charter is binding upon its signatories. OAU has also issued guidelines for electoral observation.

Commonwealth secretariat

45. In 1991, the Commonwealth adopted the Harare Declaration, which gave high priority to the organization's promotion of its fundamental political values, defined as democracy, democratic processes and institutions which reflect national circumstances, human rights, the rule of law and just and honest government. In 1991, the Commonwealth secretariat prepared guidelines for Commonwealth groups which observe elections in member countries. The Commonwealth has also published a manual entitled "Organization of free and fair elections at cost-effective levels", aimed at assisting Commonwealth Governments, electoral authorities and opposition parties to contribute to the organization and conduct of presidential and general elections.

Inter-Parliamentary Union

46. In 1994, the IPU adopted a document entitled "Declaration on criteria for free and fair elections", which established norms regarding the rights of citizens, parties and States with respect to the electoral process. Also in 1994, in connection with standard-setting in the area of gender, IPU adopted a plan of action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life. In 1997, the IPU Council adopted at Cairo a universal declaration on democracy; representatives of the parliaments of 128 countries participated in the work of the Cairo conference. In 1998, IPU published a model code of conduct for elections[13] which acknowledges that a successful and informed electoral process is the joint responsibility of all involved: political parties and candidates; supporters and voters; police and security forces; Governments and public officials; media and observers. An annex to the model code of conduct contains a compendium of 16 codes adopted in internationally assisted elections.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

47. In response to a series of commitments which were adopted at a round table jointly organized in 1995 by the United Nations and International IDEA on the topic of international electoral observation, International IDEA has published a code of conduct for the ethical and professional observation of elections, which emphasized the standards of comprehensiveness, transparency and accuracy in observation. It has also published a code of conduct for the ethical and professional administration of elections, which emphasized the norms of demonstrating respect for the law, non-partisanship, transparency, accuracy and service to the voters. In 1998, it published guidelines for determining involvement in international election observation.

48. As part of the Central Evaluation Unit survey referred to above, some intergovernmental organizations and NGOs active in electoral assistance provided comments pertinent to the issue of a United Nations declaration on standards and norms. Those who considered that a declaration by the General Assembly on the process of observation would be useful referred to some or all of the following elements:

(a) The importance of a long-term perspective for the observation of democratic processes;

(b) The involvement of national observers;

(c) Electoral assistance to be provided with a developmental viewpoint in mind;

(d) A mechanism for learning from experience in democratic development;

(e) Minimal training for observers.

One respondent thought that proposals along these lines should emerge from a meeting of international groups involved in electoral observation and assistance.

III. United Nations electoral activities

A. Electoral Activities of the Electoral Assistance Division

1. Preliminary processes

49. All United Nations electoral assistance is based on a formal written request from the Government, which should be transmitted at least 12 weeks before the election to the focal

point for electoral assistance. The request is usually conveyed through the local UNDP representative or through the permanent mission to the United Nations.

50. When a request for electoral assistance is submitted to the focal point for electoral assistance, an initial screening takes place through consultation between the Electoral Assistance Division and the regional desk to which the request was forwarded for analysis within the Department of Political Affairs. The report of the Glen Cove retreat stated that while the Division continues to consult with regional divisions on substantive issues in order to make its recommendations to the focal point, it has experienced difficulty in receiving timely regional division inputs. In most cases, the Division is requested to take immediate action since most requests need to be dealt with on an urgent basis.

51. In the cases of first-time elections, complex political situations or unclear requests, a United Nations needs assessment mission is often sent to the requesting country. Its report is the basis for discussions to determine whether the United Nations should provide assistance, and if so the most appropriate type of assistance. An analysis of the statistics provided to CEU by the Division indicates that since 1992, there has been some increase in the proportion of requests which result in needs assessment missions.

Malawi: a case study of the needs assessment phase

52. On 22 October 1992, the United Nations received a request from the Government of Malawi for assistance in the organization and funding of a referendum on the issue of one-party/multi-party systems of government. The preparatory mission, which included a human rights officer from the former Centre for Human Rights, spent a week in Malawi in November 1992 and had consultations with the following groups: government officials and representatives, including members of the cabinet; members of the task force on the holding of a referendum in Malawi; members of the electoral commission; local officials and traditional chiefs; representatives of local NGOs; the media; religious communities; and representatives of the donor community. Towards the end of their visit, the members of the team met with the President of Malawi. The needs assessment report focused on preconditions related to the freedom and fairness of the referendum process. The draft report was provided to the Government for comments before it was finalized; most of its comments were incorporated in the final report, which was circulated among individuals who had participated in the consultations. In December 1992, a follow-up mission was requested by the President of Malawi and his Cabinet. The Government also requested the participation of a consultant to assist it in drafting referendum regulations and other legal texts. In response, the Director of the Electoral Assistance Division and a legal adviser from the former Centre for Human Rights, went to Malawi in January 1993. As previously, the members of mission held meetings with many parties. The report of the second mission identified major sources of disagreement among the parties which would seriously affect the organization of a free and fair referendum, and made recommendations to promote consensus on these issues. In March 1993, a third United Nations mission was sent to Malawi to report on the organization of the referendum a few months before it was scheduled. Despite the short time available, electoral assistance was provided and the referendum took place in June 1993. The UNDP resident coordinator provided critical support at all stages of the operation, particularly in facilitating discussion between the Government and opposition at crucial junctures, and in coordinating donor assistance (see A/48/590, para. 43). A United Nations electoral assistance secretariat was established almost three months before the referendum. Its basic tasks were the coordination of international observers, technical advice and assistance to the National Referendum Commission, poll worker training and civic education (see A/48/590, para. 42). Observer coverage began with

registration, continued through the campaign and concluded with the conduct of the referendum. A majority of the voters supported multiparty democracy.

2. Nature and extent of assistance, 1992–1998

53. A review of statistics included in the annual reports of the Electoral Assistance Division (see table 2) indicates that the number of requests was highest in 1992 due to the number of countries, particularly in Africa, which were holding their first democratic elections; the ratio of requests to missions sent was also highest that year. There has been a gradual decline in that ratio from 1993 to the present.

Table 2
Electoral assistance provided by the Electoral Assistance Division, 1992–1998[a]

	Requests		*Assistance*		
Year	*Number of Member States requesting assistance*	*Number of requests*	*Number of Member States receiving assistance*	*Number of assistance missions*	*Ratio of requests missions sent (percentage)*
1992	29	31	27	28	90
1993	19	20	16	16	80
1994	17	18	13	14	78
1995	22	22	16	16	73
1996	24	26	13	13	50
1997	12	15	8	8	53
1998	19	21	10	10	47
Total	**78[b]**	**153**	**68[b]**	**105**	**68**

Sources: Electoral Assistance Division, annual reports, and A/51/512.

[a] Excluding the major missions discussed in sect. III B below, and excluding needs assessment missions unless they were the only form of assistance.

[b] Overall, 1992–1998 (many States requested/received assistance in more than one year).

54. The four major types of electoral assistance provided by the Division, excluding the major missions, are:

(a) *Coordination and support.* The primary purpose of coordination and support is to create an effective and integrated observer network out of a number of small international delegations which is relatively economical, requires less lead time than other forms of international observation, and shares financial and personnel costs among all participating sponsors (see A/48/590, para. 38). Once the focal point for electoral assistance has determined that a coordination and support mission is both desirable and feasible, an electoral assistance secretariat is established in the country to plan and manage all aspects of the international observation operation, including the provision of logistical and technical support to the Joint International Observer Group (JIOG). The JIOG includes a core group of long-term observers, sponsored and seconded by the international community, whose purpose is to establish a presence in each major region of a country and to observe the electoral campaign. During the pre-election phases, the observers report to the secretariat coordinator on a regular basis, taking note of major election-related events, monitoring media coverage of the campaign and indicating any problems which may impact the viability

of the elections. The observers also receive complaints from individuals and transmit these to the secretariat coordinator. Several days prior to election day, a large group of short-term international observers arrive in the country to augment the core observer group. The short-term observers may be sponsored by donor Governments, international intergovernmental institutions and NGOs, or recruited locally through the resident international community. Prior to their deployment throughout the country, the observers are officially accredited and participate in pre-election debriefing sessions. They observe election day polling, the vote count and the central tabulation of results in their respective districts and return to the capital to participate in post-elections debriefing sessions. Upon completion of the observation process, the JIOG typically releases a press statement describing the observation findings;

(b) *Technical assistance.* Such assistance can be classified in three general categories: (i) those contributing to national capacity-building through the establishment of new electoral institutions or the strengthening of existing capabilities; (ii) those which relate to the human rights aspects of the electoral process; and (iii) those which provide specific, legal, constitutional, logistic or technical advice or various types of electoral equipment and supplies. Technical assistance is provided through the Electoral Assistance Division, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, depending on the type of assistance required (see A/52/474, para. 29);

(c) *Support for national observers.* In 1994, for Mexico's national elections, the Division adopted a new approach to electoral assistance. The emphasis was on providing training for potential domestic observers that would contribute to the creation of a national network of election observers. The primary emphasis was on long-term capacity-building within the country and its contribution to the creation of confidence among citizens in their own electoral process (see A/49/675, para. 28). Despite the emphasis placed in the 1998-2001 medium-term plan on assisting and strengthening domestic monitors and the success of the Mexico experience, this approach was not applied by the Division to other countries;

(d) *Follow and report.* This type of assistance occurs in special cases, when a United Nations observer or small team may be sent to follow an electoral process and provide an internal report to the Secretary-General on the conduct of the election(see A/ 49/675, annex III, para. 16). It is generally agreed that this form of assistance has a negligible effect and is therefore not warranted unless special circumstances prevail.

55. It was not always clear to the Central Evaluation Unit which organization was assigned the leadership role in executing a specific project. Aside from UNDP funding of many technical assistance projects, UNDP resident representatives have been requested to follow and report on elections and in coordinating donors' conferences. In many cases, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs served as the implementing agency and was involved in various components of projects requiring technical and backstopping expertise. In a smaller number of cases, the Office for Project Services acted in that capacity.

3. Assessments

56. Some of the assessments available to the Central Evaluation Unit with respect to standard electoral activities are summarized in table 3. These assessments were shown to representatives of the Member States concerned and were considered acceptable.

Table 3
Some assessments of the electoral activities of the Electoral Assistance Division

Electoral mission	*Overall assessment*
1. Lesotho, 1993	The United Nations role was significant and positive. United Nations assistance built local capacity in a minor way.
2. Burundi, 1993	The United Nations role was significant and positive. United Nations assistance built local capacity indirectly: local staff were hired for certain programmes but not trained to sustain them.
3. Malawi, 1993/1994	The United Nations role was significant and positive. United Nations assistance built local capacity in a significant manner. The United Nations developed new institutional approaches in this case, which will be useful in the future. The United Nations was very influential in improving the 1993–1994 Malawi electoral process, and provided sound logistics and observer coordination. Most commentators see this as a good example of how the United Nations can provide long-term, coordinated international assistance where there is consistency of advice, minimal duplication of effort and cost-effective use of donors.
4. Mexico, 1994	The United Nations mission contributed to the preparation of an electoral observation methodology and observer manuals, in addition to technical support for strategic planning, organization of quick counts and development of logistics manuals. This novel use of assistance to aid domestic groups proved to be a means to promote national capacity-building while at the same time respecting national sovereignty.
5. United Republic of Tanzania, 1995	From the outset there were logistics, communications and briefing problems, with many of the sub-observer missions complaining that they were not consulted enough.
6. Cambodia, 1998	The ambiguity and lack of consensus on the mandate, combined with the confusion on the ground as to the exact nature of United Nations involvement, negatively affected the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations at the earliest stage of the operation. The lateness of formal United Nations involvement in the electoral process had a negative impact on the effectiveness of the electoral assistance secretariat's efforts on the ground.

Sources: 1, 2 and 3: Larry Garber and Clark Gibson, review of United Nations electoral assistance, 1992–1993, UNDP project INT/91/033, 18 August 1993; 3, 4 and 5: Taylor Wentges, *Multilateral Electoral Development: A Comparative Review of the Electoral Development Activities of the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Francophonie, the Commonwealth and the United Nations* (Government of Canada, Department of Foreign Trade and International Affairs, March 1998); 6: Department of Political Affairs, "United Nations electoral assistance to Cambodia: lessons learned and reflections for the future", 29 September 1998.

B. Major electoral missions

1. Nature of assistance

57. In contrast to the standard electoral activities of Electoral Assistance Division, each major electoral mission requires a separate mandate. There are three categories: (a) organization and conduct of elections, (b) supervision, and (c) verification. Thirteen major electoral operations have been undertaken so far. Of these, nine have included military and/or police components (Angola, Cambodia, Central African Republic, El Salvador, Eastern Slavonia, Haiti, Liberia, Mozambique and Western Sahara); the remaining four were essentially civilian operations (Eritrea, Namibia, Nicaragua and South Africa). The mandating organ (the General Assembly and/or the Security Council) endorses the final statement issued by electoral missions concerning the elections. It is worth noting that the United Nations International Police Task Force (UNIPTF), a component of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), was involved in monitoring security arrangements for three national elections in Bosnia held between 1996 and 1998. In addition, the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) is mandated to play a major role in preparation for the upcoming elections in Tajikistan, in collaboration with OSCE.

Organization and conduct of elections

58. This type of assistance is the most complex, and has been provided only in Cambodia (UNTAC) and Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES) to date. The mission in the Western Sahara is currently ongoing. Owing to the significant lead time required (a minimum of 18 months) as well as the substantial financial, personnel and material resources needed for such an operation, this type of assistance is rarely mandated (see A/49/675, annex III).

Supervision of elections

59. There have been no United Nations missions for the supervision of elections since the mission to Namibia in 1989.

Verification of elections

60. Since 1992, the United Nations has conducted verification missions in Angola, El Salvador, Eritrea, Haiti, Liberia, Nicaragua, Mozambique and South Africa. In such cases, the United Nations is requested to verify the freedom and fairness of specific aspects of the electoral process conducted by the national election authority. Because the United Nations is expected to make a final statement on the conduct of the elections, verification must cover all relevant aspects of the electoral process, thus requiring extensive chronological and geographical coverage.

2. Assessments

61. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has a lessons learned procedure that covers all components of a mission, including the electoral assistance component. In addition, there are end-of-mission reports drafted by the electoral component of peacekeeping missions, and external assessments of some missions. Common issues mentioned in these assessments that proved problematic included electoral planning, such as unrealistic timetables, late delivery of polling materials and observers pulled out before vote counting; insufficient concern about capacity-building, such as insufficient voter education; and personnel and staffing issues, such as untrained or inexperienced observers.

62. With respect to the Department's lessons learned procedures, its first attempt to draw general lessons from several missions is set out in the study "Multidisciplinary peacekeeping: lessons from recent experience", issued in December 1996. However, this study did not include a section on the electoral component of peacekeeping missions. One of the consequences of that omission was that the electoral component of subsequent missions with an electoral mandate, such as UNTAES, could not be designed to take into account agreed on lessons of experience. The *ex post facto* UNTAES lessons learned report, however, did include a section on elections.

3. Role of the Electoral Assistance Division in major electoral missions

63. The Division has been designated the responsibility centre for the electoral component of peacekeeping missions in accordance with a recommendation of the Central Evaluation Unit in 1994.[14] This responsibility incudes the following functions: (a) advises and assists the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping in the development of the electoral component of peacekeeping missions; (b) establishes, develops and maintains institutional memory, and to that end (i) develops and maintains information on previous and current peacekeeping missions, including training materials, manuals, handbooks and other instructions; and (ii) gathers information on related activities undertaken by intergovernmental, regional or non-governmental organizations as well as other entities of the United Nations system. The internal report of the Glen Cove retreat stated that the Division concluded that there was a need to review its cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with a view to strengthening the Division's activities in this context. More discussions with the Department and its Field Administration and Logistics Division are necessary as well as the need to have more regular backstopping from headquarters. The Electoral Assistance Division should get involved in the preparatory phase of the operation, and the selection of members of the electoral component should be made jointly with the Field Administration and Logistics Division.

C. Managerial issues

1. Standard operating procedures

64. The Electoral Assistance Division has handbooks and manuals with standard operating procedures in draft for most activities but it lacks a lessons learned process to revise such procedures. However, there are no standard operating procedures for support to national observers, and existing procedures do not adequately cover gender issues. The following table summarizes the findings of the Central Evaluation Unit with respect to the existence and adequacy of standard operating procedures on electoral assistance.

Table 4
United Nations standard operating procedures for electoral assistance

Type of electoral assistance	*Does an official handbook, manual or checklist exist?*	*Gender issues?*
1 General framework	Joint United Nations/UNDP guidelines of 1996 and supplement (undated) include preconditions, respective roles within the United Nations system and formal procedures for processing requests	Does not cover gender issues
2 Needs assessment missions and technical assistance	Draft guidelines, March 1997	Does not cover gender issues
3 Coordination and support of and international observers handbooks	Draft operational guidelines, March 1997, include checklists and criteria, a section on JIOG, and 11 annexes	Some checklists annexed by IGO/NGO refer to gender issues
4 Follow and report	None	
5 Support for national monitors	None	
6 Electoral component of peacekeeping missions with verification mandates	No official handbook exists Standard mandate, terms of reference, organization chart and job description of senior officials exists (March 1995)	Does not cover gender issues

65. The Electoral Assistance Division has developed and maintains a roster of international electoral experts for both the staffing of the electoral components of peacekeeping operations and the provision of United Nations electoral assistance generally. It has also invited Member States to identify candidates who might be seconded as members of United Nations electoral verification missions. The Division is currently reviewing its list of electoral experts and intends to convert it to electronic format. In addition, it has standing arrangements with the United Nations volunteer programme. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has a roster for personnel called upon to perform generalist electoral functions. The Office for Project Services also has a roster.

2. Institutional memory and lessons learned processes

66. The joint United Nations/UNDP guidelines on providing electoral assistance state that at the conclusion of each project, the Division should receive a final project report from the experts involved. The resident coordinator may also be requested to assess the performance of the consultant and the effectiveness of the assistance provided. Based on such evaluation, the Electoral Assistance Division can improve future performance and better anticipate future country needs. At the current time, neither the Electoral Assistance Division nor the UNDP Management Development and Governance Division maintain a documentation centre which includes end-of-mission reports and evaluations of electoral assistance projects; the resident representative does not always provide end-of-mission reports to the Electoral Assistance Division. There is no systematic and comprehensive institutional memory of assistance projects and no inventory of lessons learned from electoral assistance.

67. As the report to the General Assembly on the follow-up process to the Third Conference on New or Restored Democracies indicates, UNDP, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs will be creating Web sites on democratization and good governance; the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will compile extensive information on inventories, databases and directories pertaining to democratization and governance, and has prepared a proposal on in-depth assessments by Governments on the assistance provided to them in these areas.[15]

68. There have been several external assessment studies of United Nations electoral assistance which follow well-conceived methodologies. The 1993 Garber and Gibson study, for example, organized its findings in terms of the following issues:

(a) Whether or not the United Nations mission played a significant role in the election;

(b) Whether or not local capacity was built up by the mission;

(c) Whether or not the United Nations should have participated in this election in the manner it did;

(d) Suggested modification to standard operating procedures.

The Electoral Assistance Division has conducted one lessons learned study, on the coordination and support of the elections in Cambodia in July 1998. It consisted of a one-day meeting with discussions following a pre-established agenda, which included such issues as the formulation of the mandate and conditions of United Nations involvement, the operation of the electoral assistance secretariat and the Joint International Observer Group, funding and management and coordination. A member of the Central Evaluation Unit attended the meeting, which included interesting and highly informed discussions. However, the Department of Political Affairs had not established an assessment methodology as a basis for conducting this process, and did not follow the methodology developed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations lessons learned unit (see E/AC.51/1998/4, para. 5, for a description of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations procedures). Unlike the that unit's procedure, the discussions did not result in a public document. However, it was suggested that an independent evaluation of the United Nations recent experience in Cambodia in general and a separate assessment of the electoral assistance operation would complement the discussions of the day. There was no clear-cut conclusion on the outcome of the mission similar to those which are included in both the Gerber and the Wentges' reviews. Future lessons learned studies of the Electoral Assistance Division should take into account the methodologies developed for external assessments.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Concluding observations

69. *Effectiveness, efficiency and relevance.* During the period under review, 1992–1998, electoral assistance under the auspices of the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs was provided to 68 Member States, mainly in the forms of coordination and support for international observation and technical assistance. These activities have made significant contributions to the conduct of specific elections in many Member States. They have also contributed to the development of electoral institutions in some of these States. This impact has been achieved by expenditures that were small in

comparison with those of peacekeeping and other large-scale missions with electoral responsibilities.

70. *Lessons learned.* High-quality assessments of experience exist in this area, and lessons learned procedures are in place for large-scale missions and have begun for smaller-scale missions as well. Handbooks, manuals and checklists exist for virtually most aspects of assistance related to specific elections. It is generally agreed that United Nations electoral assistance activities in Malawi in 1993–1994 and in Mexico in 1994 were models of success. The identity of the more problematic experiences is also fairly clear, but it is more difficult to draw lessons from these cases. The United Nations should continue to be selective in its response to requests for electoral assistance by requiring preconditions endorsed by the General Assembly to be in place.

71. *Evolution of the context of United Nations assistance.* Since the Electoral Assistance Division was established, many regional and other intergovernmental organizations and several NGOs have acquired a great deal of experience in electoral assistance and developed sophisticated capacities in its provision. More importantly, most new and newly restored democracies have now conducted two or even three rounds of multi-party elections and so now need assistance that is not primarily focused on the mechanics of the election itself but on building up and sustaining the capacities of democratic institutions. The mandates in electoral assistance given by the General Assembly to the Secretariat have broadened to reflect this evolution. The UNDP governance programme provides an appropriate organizational setting for its electoral assistance. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provides another such context through its technical cooperation programme of support to Governments and civil society in human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The work of the Electoral Assistance Division, however, has not fully adjusted to broader realities and mandates. With the recent appointment of a new Director, the Division now appears to be in a position to find useful roles in the new circumstances.

B. Recommendations

72. The following are the recommendations of OIOS:

Recommendation 1. Guidelines to Member States seeking electoral assistance

Revised guidelines, fully reflecting the broader and longer-term mandates given to the Secretariat over the last few years, including post-election assistance to contribute to the sustainability of electoral processes, gender perspective mainstreaming and the lessons of best practice learned from recent experience with electoral assistance, should be annexed, for consideration by the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, to the report of the Secretary-General requested in Assembly resolution 52/129.

Recommendation 2. Orientation and responsibilities of the Electoral Assistance Division/Department of Political Affairs

The Electoral Assistance Division/Department of Political Affairs should concentrate its work on:

(a) The *needs assessment* stage of responding to requests for electoral assistance, being more proactive in anticipating such requests, and the subsequent discussions with Governments leading to agreement on the nature of assistance to be provided and the assignment of primary responsibility for each assistance project to

the appropriate United Nations organization. In general, subsequent activity by the Division/Department should be restricted to guidance on the political aspects of any problems that might arise and coordination;

(b) The re-establishment and development of *an electoral assistance network* of governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations active in electoral assistance, and the facilitation of timely exchange of information among members by means of a Web site and the convening of periodic meetings of the network;

(c) Contributions to *intergovernmental political debate* on (i) enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization, (ii) respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and (iii) support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies;

(d) Coordination and facilitation of *lessons learned* from electoral assistance and democratization activities, including the development of systematic and shared procedures, and the formulation and revision of handbooks, guidelines and codes of good practice;

(e) Facilitation of the development of *regional associations* of electoral officials, including training and the exchange of experience and information among them;

(f) The mainstreaming of *gender issues* in all of the above activities;

(g) Actively soliciting *extrabudgetary funds*, perhaps through an annual pledging meeting in cooperation with UNDP, for the electoral assistance trust fund, and annual reporting on activities and expenditures to donors.

Recommendation 3. Allocation of responsibilities within the United Nations

The Departments of Political Affairs, Peacekeeping Operations and Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP, the Office for Project Services and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should reach an agreement by the end of 1999 on the allocation of responsibilities for an integrated response of the United Nations system to requests for assistance with electoral processes, as broadly conceived by General Assembly mandates. This agreement should cover procedures for handling requests by Member States; the maintenance of United Nations rosters and databases, the periodic training of United Nations officials, including resident representatives, and other elements of institutional preparedness and memory; and lessons learned procedures and fund-raising for electoral activities.

(*Signed*) Karl Th. **Paschke**
Under-Secretary-General
for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 16*

[2] *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2)

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6*

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 6* and corrigendum

[5] Guidelines for electoral assistance, June 1996, and supplement

[6] See Organization of American States, *Manual for the Organization of Election Observation Missions* (Washington, D.C., 1998); see also OAS Web site and brochure on the Unit

[7] See General Assembly resolutions 2200 A (XXI), which entered into force in 1976; 45/150 of 18 December 1990; 46/137 of 17 December 1991; 47/138 of 18 December 1992; 48/131 of 20 December 1993; 49/190 of 23 December 1994; 50/185 of 22 December 1995; and 52/129 of 12 December 1997.

[8] See General Assembly resolutions 45/151 of 18 December 1990; 46/130 of 17 December 1991; 47/130 of 18 December 1992; 48/124 of 20 December 1993; 49/180 of 23 December 1994; 50/172 of 22 December 1995; and 52/119 of 12 December 1997.

[9] A/46/609; A/47/668; A/48/590; A/49/675; A/50/736; A/51/761; A/52/474; A/48/1; A/49/1; A/50/1; A/51/1; A/52/1; and A/53/1

[10] A/49/30; A/50/133; A/51/31; A/52/18; and A/53/31

[11] A/50/332; A/51/761; A/52/513; and A/53/554

[12] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1520

[13] Guy S. Goodwill-Gill, "Codes of conduct for elections", study prepared for IPU (Geneva, IPU, 1998)

[14] See E/AC.51/1994/3, annex II

[15] See A/53/554